

Security chiefs block release of report on 1983 Soviet nuclear scare

US has released several documents relating to Able Archer crisis but Cabinet Office has released just the title page of joint intelligence committee report

Richard Norton-Taylor

Monday 7 December 2015 01.00 EST

Security chiefs are trying to block the release of documents that would shed fresh light on how Britain and the US came close to provoking a Soviet nuclear attack.

They are insisting that a report, The Detection of Soviet Preparations for War Against Nato, must remain secret. The report was drawn up by the joint intelligence committee (JIC) after a Nato military exercise codenamed Able Archer 83.

The US has released a number of documents relating to the crisis, specifically about Oleg Gordievsky, the KGB officer who defected to Britain. He played a key role in warning Washington about the effect of president Ronald Reagan's dangerous rhetoric on Moscow, and the Kremlin's equally dangerous paranoia.

The latest American document to be released describes how US-Soviet relations were on "hair-trigger" alert in 1983, with a watchful air force general acting "out of instinct, not informed guidance" to prevent the crisis from escalating, and Reagan calling the situation "really scary".

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Officials in the Cabinet Office have agreed to release just the title page of the JIC document but nothing more. The document was requested more than a year ago by Nate Jones, of the US National Security Archive attached to George Washington University. His request has been supported by the former head of GCHQ's Soviet division.

After months of internal debate, the Cabinet Office said the document was covered by section 23 of the Freedom of Information Act, which imposes an absolute exemption from disclosure - with no public interest defence - of material "directly or indirectly supplied" to the security and intelligence agencies.

Jones appealed to the information commissioner, Christopher Graham, who rejected his request on the grounds of national security. Graham accepted there was "a public interest in understanding the lessons learned from Able Archer 83, and that disclosure could potentially add some value to what was already publicly known regarding the exercise." However, he agreed with Cabinet Office security and intelligence officials that there was "a strong public interest in safeguarding national security", and said the JIC report was "still relevant to national security today".

relevant to national security today .

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The dispute over the JIC document comes at a time when Nato is resuming "transition to nuclear strike" exercises.

A heavily censored witness statement by Dominic Wilson, director of operational policy at the Ministry of Defence and previously a senior official in the National Security Secretariat, says the JIC report must remain firmly closed.

Last month, Oliver Letwin, the Cabinet Office minister, told the Labour MP Paul Flynn: "It would not be appropriate to release this [the JIC report] on grounds of national security."

One of those calling for the release of the report is Michael Herman, former head of GCHQ's Soviet division. He said last year: "A weakness in the UK was that the [intelligence] assessors didn't know the extent of US confrontation/provocation in Reagan's first administration. The Russians were quite right to be frightened. But how big was the crisis? Until all the evidence is declassified how do we judge?" *see NC 12-15*

Jones argues that while it was the British - mainly through Gordievsky - who discovered the dangers of the Nato war game, it has been the US that has released much more information about what its National Security Agency described as "the most dangerous Soviet-American confrontation since the Cuban missile crisis".

Roger Smethurst, head of the Cabinet Office knowledge and management unit, told Jones: "Other states and UK government departments are entitled to make their own judgments as to what of the information they hold on a subject it is appropriate to make public."

Records previously released in the US include photographs of Gordievsky debriefing Reagan. It was Gordievsky who originally alerted the UK and US to Operation Ryan, launched by the Kremlin in 1981 to detect and pre-empt a western "surprise nuclear missile attack". The existence of Operation Ryan contributed to the risk of nuclear war through miscalculation during the 1983 Able Archer scare.

Jones has now appealed to the information rights tribunal for the release of the JIC report in the interests of what he calls "governmental accountability and transparency".

The British government released one file in 2013 in response to an FoI request from Peter Burt, of the Nuclear Information Service, an independent UK-based research group. It showed that the JIC report was drawn up in response to what the MoD called "an unprecedented Soviet reaction to Able Archer 83 and other reports of alleged concern about a surprise Nato attack".

Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister, was reported to have instructed officials to "urgently consider how to approach the Americans on the question of possible Soviet misapprehensions about a surprise Nato attack".

the guardian

The spy who averted nuclear Armageddon

Letters

Tuesday 8 December 2015 14.00 EST

Your report on the withholding of vital documents concerning the Able Archer Nato manoeuvres in Europe, fails to mention the name of the man who probably did more than any other to save the world from nuclear catastrophe (Security chiefs block release of report on 1983 Soviet nuclear scare, 7 December).

Rainer Rupp, codename Topaz, was a West German working for the East German secret service at the heart of Nato in its headquarters in Brussels. Reagan's plan for a massive combined Nato exercise, simulating a nuclear war on eastern Europe using live nuclear weapons and with every sense of a real situation, so alarmed the Soviet Union that they thought the exercise was a fig leaf for the real thing - a pre-emptive strike against them. They were determined to get in first, and only days before the exercise was due to take place had their bombers loaded with nuclear bombs ready on the tarmac. Rupp was able to inform them that it was indeed only an exercise, but they still didn't believe him until he was able, at the last minute, to provide them with highly classified documentation to prove his assertion.

Without his timely intervention, the world would almost certainly have experienced a nuclear holocaust. For his efforts, Rupp was given 12 years in prison after German unification. It would be historically of great interest to know why the security chiefs are trying to block the release of documents that would shed fresh light on how Britain and the US came close to provoking a Soviet nuclear attack.

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[email to Tom Reifer, 12-13-15, from Noam Chomsky: intro to a collection of essays (by Mel Goodman?)

Introduction

In January 2015, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* advanced its famous Doomsday Clock to three minutes before midnight, a threat level that had not been reached for 30 years. The statement explaining the two-minute advance towards catastrophe invoked the two major threats to survival: nuclear weapons and “unchecked climate change.” The call condemned world leaders, who “have failed to act with the speed or on the scale required to protect citizens from potential catastrophe,” endangering “every person on Earth [by] failing to perform their most important duty—ensuring and preserving the health and vitality of human civilization.”¹

A year later, there is good reason to consider moving the hands even closer to doomsday.

As the year ended, world leaders met in Paris to address the severe problem of “unchecked climate change.” Hardly a day passes without new evidence of how severe the crisis is. To pick almost at random, shortly before the opening of the Paris conference, NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab released a study that both surprised and alarmed scientists who have been studying Arctic ice. The study showed that a huge Greenland glacier, Zachariae Isstrom, “broke loose from a glaciologically stable position in 2012 and entered a phase of accelerated retreat,” an unexpected and ominous development. The glacier “holds enough water to raise global sea level by more than 18 inches (46 centimeters) if it were to melt completely. And now it’s on a crash diet, losing 5 billion tons of mass every year. All that ice is crumbling into the North Atlantic Ocean.”²

The good news continued to accumulate as the delegates gathered.

There was little expectation that world leaders would “act with the speed or on the scale required to protect citizens from potential catastrophe.” And even if by some miracle they had, it would have been of limited value, for reasons that should be deeply disturbing.

When the final document was approved in Paris, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who hosted the talks, announced that it is “legally binding.”³ That may be the hope, but there are more than a few obstacles that are worthy of careful attention.

In all of the extensive media coverage of the Paris conference, perhaps the most important sentences are these, buried near the end of a long *New York Times* analysis: “Traditionally, negotiators have sought to forge a legally binding treaty that needed ratification by the governments of the participating countries to have force. There is no way to get that in this case, because of the United States. A treaty would be dead on arrival on Capitol Hill without the

¹ “2015: It Is Three Minutes to Midnight,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, <http://thebulletin.org/clock/2015>.

² “In Greenland, Another Major Glacier Comes Undone,” Jet Propulsion Lab, California Institute of Technology, Nov. 12, 2015. <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.php?feature=4771>.

³ John D. Sutter and Joshua Berlinger, “Final draft of climate deal formally accepted in Paris,” CNN, Dec. 12, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/12/world/global-climate-change-conference-vote/>.

required two-thirds majority vote in the Republican-controlled Senate. So the voluntary plans are taking the place of mandatory, top-down targets.” And voluntary plans are a guarantee of failure.⁴

“Because of the United States.” More precisely, because of the Republican Party, which by now is becoming a real danger to decent human survival.

The conclusions are underscored in the final reporting of the Paris agreement. At the end of a long lead story on the achievement, the report observes that the system created “depends heavily on the views of the future world leaders who will carry out those policies. In the United States, every Republican candidate running for president in 2016 has publicly questioned or denied the science of climate change, and has voiced opposition to Mr. Obama’s climate change policies. In the Senate, Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, who has led the charge against Mr. Obama’s climate change agenda, said, ‘Before his international partners pop the champagne, they should remember that this is an unattainable deal based on a domestic energy plan that is likely illegal, that half the states have sued to halt, and that Congress has already voted to reject’.”⁵

Both parties have moved to the right during the neoliberal period of the past generation. Mainstream Democrats are now pretty much what used to be called “moderate Republicans.” Meanwhile the Republican Party has largely drifted off the spectrum, becoming what respected conservative political analysts call a “radical insurgency” that has virtually abandoned normal parliamentary politics.⁶ With the rightward drift, the Party’s dedication to wealth and privilege had become so extreme that its actual policies could not attract voters, so it had to seek a new popular base, mobilized on other grounds: evangelical Christians who await the Second Coming,⁷ nativists who fear that “they” are taking our country away from us, unreconstructed racists,⁸ people with real grievances who gravely mistake their causes,⁹ and others like them who are easy prey to demagogues and can readily become a radical insurgency.

⁴ Coral Davenport, “Paris Deal Would Herald an Important First Step on Climate Change,” *NYT*, Nov. 29, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/30/us/politics/paris-climate-talks.html>.

⁵ Coral Davenport, “Nations Approve Landmark Climate Accord in Paris,” *NYT*, Dec. 12, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/europe/climate-change-accord-paris.html>.

⁶ P. 144, below.

⁷ Evangelicals heavily dominate the first Republican primary, in Iowa. Polls there show that of likely Republican voters, “Nearly six in 10 say climate change is a hoax. More than half want mass deportations of illegal immigrants. Six in 10 would abolish the Internal Revenue Service” (thereby providing a huge gift to the superrich and corporate sector). Trip Gabriel, “Ted Cruz Surges Past Donald Trump to Lead in Iowa Poll,” *NYT*, Dec. 12, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/us/politics/ted-cruz-surges-past-donald-trump-to-lead-in-iowa-poll.html>.

⁸ Sociologists Rory McVeigh and David Cunningham found that a significant predictor of current Republican voting patterns in the South is the prior existence of a strong chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1960s. Bill Schaller, “Ku Klux Klan’s lasting legacy on the U.S. political system,” *Brandeis Now*, Dec. 4, 2014. <https://www.brandeis.edu/now/2014/december/cunningham-klk-impact.html>.

⁹ Shawn Donnan and Sam Fleming, “America’s Middle-class Meltdown: Fifth of US adults live in or near to poverty,” *Financial Times*, Dec. 11, 2015. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/c3de7f66-9f96-11e5-beba-5e33e2b79e46.html?siteedition=intl#axzz3u6ER9XPq>.

In recent years, the Republican establishment has managed to suppress the voices of the base that it has mobilized. No longer. By the end of 2015 the establishment was expressing considerable dismay and desperation over its inability to do so, as the base and its choices fell out of control.

Republican elected officials, and contenders for the next presidential election, expressed open contempt for the Paris deliberations, even refusing to attend. The three candidates who led in the polls at the time – Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Ben Carson – adopted the stand of the largely evangelical base: humans have no impact on global warming, if it is happening at all. The other candidates reject government action to deal with the matter. Immediately after Obama spoke in Paris, pledging that the US would be in the vanguard seeking global action, the Republican-dominated Congress voted to scuttle his recent Environmental Protection Agency rules to cut carbon emissions. As the press reported, this was “a provocative message to more than 100 [world] leaders that the American president does not have the full support of his government on climate policy” – a bit of an understatement. Meanwhile Lamar Smith, Republican head of the House committee on Science, Space, and Technology, carried forward his jihad against government scientists who dare to report the facts.¹⁰

The message is clear. American citizens face an enormous responsibility right at home.

A companion story in the *New York Times* reports that “Two-thirds of Americans support the United States joining a binding international agreement to curb growth of greenhouse gas emissions.” And by five-to-three, Americans regard the climate as more important than the economy. But it doesn’t matter. Again, a strong message to Americans. It illustrates the extent to which the fate of the world is in their hands, not least by curing the dysfunctional political system, in which popular opinion is a marginal factor – with no illusions about the past, these developments are nonetheless one of the gifts of the neoliberal assault on the world’s population in the past generation, not just in the US.¹¹

Let us turn to the other (and traditional) concern of the atomic scientists who adjust the Doomsday Clock: nuclear weapons. The current threat of nuclear war amply justifies their decision to advance the clock towards midnight last January. What has happened since reveals the growing threat even more clearly, a matter that elicits insufficient concern, in my opinion.

The former head of the US Strategic Command (STRATCOM), which controls nuclear weapons, reflected that we have so far survived the nuclear age “by some combination of skill, luck, and

¹⁰ Sewell Chan and Melissa Eddy, “Republicans Make Presence Felt at Climate Talks by Ignoring Them,” *NYT*, Dec. 11, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/world/europe/republicans-make-presence-felt-at-climate-talks-by-ignoring-them.html>. David Herszenhorn “Votes in Congress Move to Undercut Climate Pledge,” *NYT*, Dec. 1, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/02/us/politics/as-obama-pushes-climate-deal-republicans-move-to-block-emissions-rules.html?_r=0. Samantha Page, “America’s Scientists to House Science Committee: Go Away,” *ClimateProgress*, Nov. 25, 2015. <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2015/11/25/3725782/scientists-scold-science-committee-chair/>.

¹¹ Giovanni Russonello, “Two-Thirds of Americans Want U.S. to Join Climate Change Pact,” *NYT*, Nov. 30, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/01/world/americas/us-climate-change-republicans-democrats.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource>.

divine intervention, and I suspect the latter in greatest proportion.”¹² A review of the record reveals that survival through the nuclear age has been a virtual miracle – the kind of miracle that we cannot confidently expect to persist.

X One illustration of the persistent threat is the last time the Doomsday Clock reached three minutes before midnight: in 1983, at the time of the Able Archer exercises of the Reagan administration. These exercises simulated attacks on the Soviet Union to test their defense systems. Released Russian archives reveal that the Russians were deeply concerned by the operations and were preparing to respond, which would mean, simply: The End. “The War Scare was for Real,” a US intelligence study concludes.¹³ *How and to know?*

X In the past few months we have learned more about these rash and reckless exercises, and about how close the world was to disaster. US military and intelligence analyst Melvin Goodman, who was CIA division chief and senior analyst at the Office of Soviet Affairs at the time of Able Archer, has recently elaborated: “In addition to the Able Archer mobilization exercise that alarmed the Kremlin,” Goodman writes, “the Reagan administration authorized unusually aggressive military exercises near the Soviet border that, in some cases, violated Soviet territorial sovereignty. The Pentagon’s risky measures included sending U.S. strategic bombers over the North Pole to test Soviet radar, and naval exercises in wartime approaches to the USSR where U.S. warships had previously not entered. Additional secret operations simulated surprise naval attacks on Soviet targets.”¹⁴

Goodman brings up these facts to warn us that comparable situations are recurring today with potential confrontations and rising tensions.

X It was learned a few years ago that the world was saved from likely nuclear destruction in those frightening days by the decision of a Russian officer, Stanislav Petrov, not to transmit to higher authorities the report of automated detection systems that the USSR was under missile attack. Accordingly, Petrov took his place alongside Russian submarine commander Vassili Arkhipov, who, at a dangerous moment of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, refused to authorize the launching of nuclear torpedos when the subs were under attack by US destroyers enforcing a quarantine.

Other recently revealed examples enrich the already frightening record, lending further substance to General Butler’s warnings. Nuclear security expert Bruce Blair reports that “The closest the US came to an inadvertent strategic launch decision by the President happened in 1979, when a NORAD early warning training tape depicting a full-scale Soviet strategic strike inadvertently coursed through the actual early warning network. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was called twice in the night and told the US was under attack, and he was just picking up the phone to persuade President Carter that a full-scale response needed to be authorized right away, when a third call told him it was a false alarm.”¹⁵

¹² General Lee Butler, quoted below, p. 118.

¹³ P. 12).

¹⁴ Melvin Goodman, “The “War Scare” in the Kremlin, Revisited: Is History Repeating Itself?” Posted Oct. 27, 2015: www.counterpunch.org.

¹⁵ Aaron Tovish, “The Okinawa Missiles of October,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 25 Oct., 2015. <http://thebulletin.org/okinawa-missiles-october8826>.

X This newly revealed example brings to mind a critical incident of 1995, when the trajectory of a US-Norwegian rocket carrying scientific equipment resembled the path of a nuclear missile, eliciting Russian concerns that reached President Boris Yeltsin, who had to decide whether to launch a nuclear strike.¹⁶

Blair adds other examples from his own experience. In one case, at the time of the 1967 Middle East war, "a carrier nuclear-aircraft crew was sent an actual attack order instead of an exercise/training nuclear order." A few years later, in the early 1970s, the Strategic Air Command, Omaha, "retransmitted an exercise ... launch order as an actual real-world launch order." In both cases code checks had failed; human intervention prevented the launch. "But you get the drift here," Blair adds. "It just wasn't that rare for these kinds of snafus to occur."

X Blair made these comments in reaction to a report by airman John Bordne that had just been cleared by the US Air Force. Bordne was serving on the US military base in Okinawa in October 1962 at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, "the most dangerous moment in history," in Arthur Schlesinger's words, and a moment of serious crisis in Asia as well. The US nuclear alert system had been raised to Defcon 2, one level below Defcon 1, when nuclear missiles can be launched immediately. At the peak of the crisis, on October 28, a missile crew received authorization to launch its nuclear missiles, in error. They decided not to, averting likely nuclear war and joining Petrov and Arkhipov in the Pantheon of men who decided to disobey protocol, saving the world.

As Blair observed, such incidents are not uncommon. One recent expert study find dozens of false alarms every year during the period reviewed, 1977 to 1983. The study concludes that the range is 43 to 255 per year. The author of the study, Seth Baum, summarizes with appropriate words: "Nuclear war is the black swan we can never see, except in that brief moment when it is killing us. We delay eliminating the risk at our own peril. Now is the time to address the threat, because now we are still alive."¹⁷

✓ These reports, like those of Eric Schlosser's extensive review,¹⁸ keep mostly to US systems. The Russian ones are doubtless much more error-prone. That is not to mention the extreme danger posed by others, notably Pakistan (p. 147).

Sometimes the threat has not been accident but adventurism, as in the case of Able Archer. The most extreme case was "the most dangerous moment in history," in October 1962, the Cuban missile crisis. The threat of disaster was all too real. The way it was handled is shocking, as is the manner in which it is commonly interpreted, a matter to which we return.¹⁹

With the grim record in mind, it is useful to look at strategic debates and planning. One chilling case is the Clinton-era 1995 STRATCOM study "Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence."²⁰ The study calls for retaining the right of first strike, even against non-nuclear states. It explains

✓ ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norwegian_rocket_incident.

¹⁷ Baum, "Nuclear war, the black swan we can never see," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 21 Nov., 2014. <http://thebulletin.org/nuclear-war-black-swan-we-can-never-see7821>.

¹⁸ Note 459, below.

¹⁹ See pp. 66f., below.

²⁰ See p. 122, below.

that nuclear weapons are constantly used, in the sense that they "cast a shadow over any crisis or conflict." It also urges a "national persona" of irrationality and vindictiveness to intimidate the world.

Current doctrine is explored in the lead article in the journal *International Security*, one of the most authoritative in the domain of strategic doctrine.²¹ The authors explain that the US is committed to "strategic primacy" – that is, insulation from retaliatory strike. This is the logic behind Obama's "new triad" -- strengthening submarine and land-based missiles and the bomber force -- along with missile defense to counter a retaliatory strike. The concern raised by the authors is that the US demand for strategic primacy might induce China to react by abandoning its "no-first-use" policy and by expanding its limited deterrent. The authors think that they will not, but it remains uncertain. Clearly the doctrine enhances the dangers in a tense and conflicted region.

The same is true of NATO expansion to the East in violation of verbal promises to Mikhail Gorbachev when the USSR was collapsing and he agreed to allow a unified Germany to become part of NATO, quite a remarkable concession when one thinks about the history of the century. Expansion to East Germany took place at once. In the following years, under Clinton, NATO moved on to Russia's borders. There are substantial threats even to incorporate Ukraine, in Russia's geostrategic heartland.²²

One can imagine how the US would react if the Warsaw Pact were still alive, most of Latin America had joined, and now Mexico and Canada were applying for membership. Aside from that, Russia understands as well as China – and US strategists for that matter – that the missile defense systems near Russia's borders are, in effect, a first strike weapon, aimed to establish strategic primacy – immunity from retaliation. Perhaps their mission is utterly unfeasible, as some specialists argue. But the targets can never be confident of that. And Russia's militant reactions are quite naturally interpreted by NATO as a threat to the West.

One prominent British Ukraine scholar poses what he calls a "fateful geographical paradox: that Nato exists to manage the risks created by its existence."²³

The threats are very real right now. Fortunately, the shooting down of a Russian plane by a Turkish F-16 in November did not lead to an international incident, but it might have, particularly given the circumstances. The plane was on a bombing mission in Syria. It passed for a mere 17 seconds through a fringe of Turkish territory that protrudes into Syria, and evidently was heading for Syria, where it crashed. Shooting it down appears to have been a needlessly reckless and provocative act. And an act with consequences. In reaction, Russia

²¹ Fiona S. Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, "Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and U.S.-China Strategic Stability," *International Security*, Fall 2015.

²² After the uprising that established the pro-western Ukrainian government, its parliament voted "303 to 8, to rescind a policy of 'nonalignment' and to instead pursue closer military and strategic ties with the West,... tak[ing] steps toward joining NATO." David M. Herszenhorn, *NYT*, Dec. 23, 2014.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/24/world/europe/ukraine-parliament-nato-vote.html?ref=world&r=0>.

²³ Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. See Jonathan Steele, review, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/19/frontline-ukraine-crisis-in-borderlands-richard-sakwa-review-account>.

announced that its bombers will henceforth be accompanied by jet fighters and that it is deploying sophisticated anti-aircraft missile systems in Syria. Russia also ordered its missile cruiser Moskva with its long-range air defense system to move closer to shore, so that it may be "ready to destroy any aerial target posing a potential danger to our aircraft," Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced. All of this sets the stage for confrontations that could be lethal.²⁴

Tensions are also constant at NATO-Russian borders, including military maneuvers on both sides. Shortly after the Doomsday Clock was moved ominously close to midnight, the national press reported that "U.S. military combat vehicles paraded Wednesday through an Estonian city that juts into Russia, a symbolic act that highlighted the stakes for both sides amid the worst tensions between the West and Russia since the Cold War."²⁵ Shortly before, a Russian warplane came within seconds of colliding with a Danish civilian airliner. Both sides are practicing rapid mobilization and redeployment of forces to the Russia-NATO border, "both believe a war is no longer unthinkable."²⁶

X If that is so, both sides are beyond insanity, since a war will destroy everything. It has been known for decades that a first strike by a major power will destroy the attacker, even without retaliation, simply from the effects of nuclear winter.

But that is today's world. And not just today's. That is what we have been living with for 70 years. And the reasoning throughout is remarkable. As discussed below, security for the population has typically not been a leading concern of policymakers. That has been true from the earliest days of the nuclear age, when in the centers of policy formation there were no efforts – apparently not even expressed thoughts – to eliminate the one serious potential threat to the United States, as might have been possible.²⁷ And so matters continue to the present, in ways just briefly sampled. ICBMs

That is the world we have been living in, and live in today. Nuclear weapons pose a constant danger of instant destruction, but at least we know in principle how to alleviate the threat, even to eliminate it, an obligation undertaken (and disregarded) by the nuclear powers that have signed the Non-proliferation Treaty. The threat of global warming is not instantaneous, though it is dire in the longer term and might escalate suddenly. That we have the capacity to deal with it is not entirely clear, though there can be no doubt that the longer the delay, the more extreme the calamity.

Prospects for decent long-term survival are not high unless there is a significant change of course. A large share of the responsibility is in our hands – the opportunities as well.

²⁴ "In Wake of Turkey Provocation, Putin Orders Anti-Aircraft Missiles to Syria," Common Dreams, Nov. 25, 2015. <http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/11/25/wake-turkey-provocation-putin-orders-anti-aircraft-missiles-syria>.

²⁵ Michael Birnbaum, "U.S. military vehicles paraded 300 yards from the Russian border," *Washington Post*, Feb. 24, 2015. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/02/24/u-s-military-vehicles-paraded-300-yards-from-the-russian-border/?wpisrc=nl_headlines&wpmm=1.

²⁶ Ian Kearns, "Avoiding War in Europe: The Risks From NATO-Russian Close Military Encounters," *Arms Control Today*, Nov. 2015.

²⁷ See pp. 119f.